

UC SANTA BARBARA

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[Andrea Estrada](#)

Vietnam Veteran and Award-Winning Author Tim O'Brien to Speak at UCSB

United States involvement in the Vietnam War was reaching its peak at about the same time Tim O'Brien graduated from Macalester College. Opposed to the military conflict, he nonetheless reported for duty as required by his local draft board. He was assigned to 3rd Platoon, where he served as an infantry foot soldier.

On Tuesday, Oct. 22, O'Brien will share his experiences as a soldier and a veteran in a talk titled "After the War." His lecture is presented by UC Santa Barbara's Interdisciplinary Humanities Center (IHC), and is part of the center's 2013-14 lecture series "The Value of Care." Free and open to the public, it will begin at 4 p.m. in UCSB's Lotte Lehmann Concert Hall.

The author of "The Things They Carried," an award-winning collection of related stories about a platoon of American soldiers in the Vietnam War, O'Brien will discuss the similarities between his own experiences in Vietnam 40 years ago and those of soldiers in the more recent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. He will address some of the difficulties veterans encounter as they try to readjust to civilian life, and how storytelling can serve as a powerful force for healing.

A yearlong series, "The Value of Care" will explore the many ways in which cultures and societies have organized themselves around care, and the ways in which care, as a creative and transformative constant of human life, links individuals to one another and to institutions and communities of often global reach. "The Value of

Care" will draw upon speakers in education, philosophy, labor studies, architecture and feminist studies.

"While each of the presentations in the series will have a unique focus, a number of broadly defined common interests run through them," said IHC director Susan Derwin. "The first is the generative function of care practices -- their ability to create bridges between individuals and groups whose experiences are often unrelated, divergent or isolated from one another."

A second area of concentration, she noted, concerns the rights of specific populations, some of whom are identified by age and social position, such as students and senior citizens, and others by vocation, such as military service members and domestic caregivers.

The third focal point involves governmental policies and institutional practices executed on behalf of national security or political and economic strength. Speakers addressing these topics include a journalist who will discuss United States surveillance practices and a bioethicist-physician who has treated prisoners engaged in hunger strikes in Guantanamo Bay detention camp.

Among other events taking place during fall quarter are talks by Dartmouth College professor Susan Brison and psychologist and filmmaker Jan Haaken. On Tuesday, Oct. 29, Brison will speak on "Relational Selves and Narrative Communities in the Aftermath of Trauma," in which she will explore the role of care in her own recovery from a violent crime, and the ways in which narrative communities can help -- or hinder -- a trauma survivor's healing.

On Tuesday, Nov. 19, Haaken will discuss her new documentary film project, "Mind Zone," which follows members of the 113th Army Combat Stress Control unit as they carry out two conflicting missions -- protecting soldiers from battle fatigue and keeping those same soldiers in the fight. A screening of the film will take place on Monday, Nov. 18.

In another talk, on Tuesday, Nov. 26, "Robot Caregivers and Robo-therapy in Japan: Treating the 'Trauma' of Aging," Jennifer Robertson of the University of Michigan will address the use of robots as caregivers and companions for the elderly in Japan. Already part of a booming high-tech industry, robots are being developed to stabilize and even reverse the effects of age-related dementia and depression.

More information about the yearlong series, including a complete schedule of events and locations, can be found at <http://www.ihc.ucsb.edu/care>.

O'Brien's talk is cosponsored with the Santa Barbara Public Library's community reading program, The Big Read, and the Friends of the Santa Barbara Public Library.

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